

Port Wine Stains Part 2 by Gedry

Series: [Port Wine Stains \[2\]](#)

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Summary:

A continuation of Billy and Steve's relationship.

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Kissing Billy Hargrove is a revelation. Steve's never gotten any complaints about his skills, mind you. With all of Billy's aggressive tendencies Steve had been expecting them to bang their way through the apartment door ripping at each others clothing and collapse in a heap of young, male, lust until they flop there covered in come.

Understandably, he's a little surprised when what he gets instead is Billy kissing his way across Steve's fingers down to his wrist where Billy's tongue slips out to brush across Steve's skin with so much tenderness that it leaves Steve breathless.

His uniform pants are suddenly way too tight.

But then it's over as fast as it started. Billy smiling this shy, vulnerable smile as he gently pushes Steve toward the bedroom and murmurs "I smell like cheeseburgers. Shower's waiting for me."

And then he's gone and Steve is left kind of feeling like a fish out of water. There's supposed to be kissing....his kisses are in the shower. Steve strips out of his uniform and pulls on some sweatpants before padding into the bathroom to brush his teeth while Billy finishes. "I want a turn after you," he garbles through the toothpaste in his mouth and shifts to the side of the sink to spit as Billy squeezes out of the shower behind him and Steve catches just a hint of his boyfriend's bare ass when Billy all but prances out of the bathroom.

He sighs. Still no kisses.

He's so wound up Steve's tempted to jack off. Granted he's still holding out hope that he might get some action tonight. But he's almost 19 and he figures he's pushing it. Three times in one day is a lot even for him. Then he has to stop himself from thinking about the fantasy he got off too this morning because that is totally not helping.

He's out, scrubbed dry and scuffing, slightly disappointed, to the bedroom when Steve skids to a stop just inside the door. Billy's been busy. The lights are lowered, granted it's by tossing an old t-shirt over the second hand lampshade they found at the thrift shop but still. The bed's got fresh sheets, and Steve can hear Clapton playing in the background all moody and slow. It's pretty much perfect, except Billy's pacing like he thinks something really terrible is about to happen.

"Nervous?" Steve asks and tries not to giggle when Billy jumps.

"Fuck, yes," Billy breathes out as he reaches up to yank on his hair that much to Steve's delight is finally starting to grow back in. "Come here, Princess. I want you close to me."

Steve doesn't hesitate to comply. Being close to Billy is pretty much his number one life goal recently. "I won't bite," he whispers as he brushes his nose against his soulmate's cheek.

"I hope you're lying," Billy chuckles as he wraps his arms around Steve and pulls him close. "I like a good nibble now and then."

“Is now starting any time soon, Asshole?” Steve huffs when Billy dodges his attempt to bring their lips together. “I’m dying here.”

Billy makes a noise, low and gruff in his throat, before reaching one arm up to tangle in Steve’s hair and tug his head slightly to the side. “Not going to rush this, Baby. We only get one first kiss and for once in my life I get to do something right.”

And...yeah. Steve’s going to deny forever that he tears up a little about that. He sighs before opening his mouth to agree when Billy’s nose is suddenly caressing the side of his face, his lips sliding across Steve’s forehead then nipping the tip of his nose. Steve’s breath catches and right when he can’t stand it anymore Billy’s *there*. Steve feels his knees buckle, he hears himself making a very embarrassing noise in response but couldn’t give a fuck about that.

It’s hot and slow and wet. Billy tastes like toothpaste and *Billy* and God help him, Steve never knew you could crave the scent and the taste of a person so bad. His teeth tug on Steve’s low lip before soothing the sharp bite of it with his tongue. Steve’s foggy brain finally coming back online long enough to get involved in the activities. Billy’s huff of laughter warm and sweet against his cheek.

It’s the best kiss...the best thing Steve has ever done. And then he yawns, unexpected and ill timed right into Billy’s mouth.

He’s the worst *fucking* boyfriend in the world.

"Time for bed, Baby." Billy rumbles with a smile against Steve's red hot cheek. His embarrassment making his whole face flame. Billy nudges him to the side of their bed and gently pushes him down. Steve huffs and presses his face into his soulmate's stomach.

"I don't want to go to bed," he complains. "This was supposed to be *our night*, like THE BIG night, and I'm dead on my feet. I'm so sorry."

He relaxes into Billy, settling into the soft caress Billy is giving him by running his fingers through Steve's hair. They stay that way for a few minutes until Steve yawns again and Billy snorts, tipping Steve's head back to press a hot, quick, kiss onto Steve's lips before getting into bed and tugging Steve down with him. Steve goes along with it, flopping down onto his side of the bed and yanking the covers up over himself with a huff. It's stupid, and he really is exhausted, but Steve can feel tears pricking at the backs of his eyes. He's not going to cry about this. He's really not.

Then Billy's wrapping himself around Steve with a contented hum and he's so warm, and Steve loves him so damn much. He feels like he exhales a months worth of pressure.

"There you go," Billy murmurs. "I love you."

"I love you ,too," Steve whispers into the dark. "I'm sorry."

Billy laughs again. "Stop it. I got up this morning, or you know, evening, thinking about how much I was going to enjoy hugging you tonight. Instead, I'm going to bed having kissed you. I wasn't planning that. I didn't have any expectations. It was a gift, you're a

gift. I'm not racing through my life for the first time ever. I don't feel like I'm in the car with my foot slammed up against the gas pedal trying to get nowhere as fast as I can. You make me want to *stay*. You make me....you make me *feel*. You...are the best gift I've ever been given and I'm grateful for you every day. I'm not alone. Not anymore. That's because of you."

Steve slips into sleep overwhelmed with emotion between one breath and the next, safe and happy.

On some level, Billy's been waiting for a phone call, for someone to stop him somewhere. For anything to happen since the day he left home behind.

Not that he ever really considered that place his home.

Still, he closes his eyes and swallows bile when Beverly calls him out of the kitchen one random night and he sees Hopper, holding his hat in both his hands, standing near the cash register.

"Steve?" Billy chokes out as he feels his hands start to shake.

"No!" Hopper's sharp denial allows Billy to take a breath. "He's fine. You're going to see him soon. I need you to come with me to the hospital. But I need to know you're going to be able to hold it together, first."

“What happened?” Billy more demands than asks.

“Susan’s hurt,” Hopper answers. Billy nods. He’s kind of numb right now. He’d never seen his dad hit his step-mom but it’s not big leap. “She’s gonna be in the hospital for while, Billy.” Hopper continues.

Billy nods again. “Max?” he questions because something just doesn’t feel right. There’s more. There has to be. He just feels it.

Hopper rubs a shaky hand down his face with a terrible sigh. “We think he broke her arm, Billy. Steve’s got her at the hospital too getting checked out.”

He’s already reaching for Billy when Billy starts yelling, “NO! Fuck, *FUCKING SHIT!!* NO! I’ll kill him. I swear to God, Hopper. I’m going to kill him. He can’t do that. He didn’t, not to her. She’s just a kid.”

Billy feels Hopper’s arm snake around him. He’s dimly aware that he’s being pulled in and held against the older man’s chest. Words just pouring out of his mouth while he sobs. “He can’t do that, Hopper. Not to her, she doesn’t deserve it. She’s not like me. She’s just a kid. She’s just a kid.”

“So are you,” Hopper whispers into Billy’s hair while he rocks him on the floor of the diner. “So are you.”

It takes him a long time to pull himself together, if that's what you want to call it. Hopper drives them both to the hospital while Billy wipes his face on his apron and stares blankly out the window of the jeep.

Steve....Billy wants Steve so damn bad right now. "Hop," He manages to squeeze out of his sob swollen throat. "Steve's still on duty, right?"

It's been an understood thing from the beginning. Steve sometimes stops by the diner at night just to check up on things. Hopper's been totally understanding, hell, even encouraging, of their relationship as soulmates. Just....not when Steve is on duty. Billy has respected that expectation without question. At this point, Hopper is the only parent figure he respects other than Joyce Byers. They've become sort of like a mom and dad to him in the past few months. He appreciates Hopper's support. But he wants his soulmate so much right now it hurts.

"Doesn't matter," Hopper responds.

"But, you asked us," Billy starts and maybe that's it, it's because Hopper asked him rather than told him.

"I know what we talked about," Hopper sighs. "And I know when rules don't apply. This is one of those times, Kid. I'm going to get you to the hospital, get you to Steve, and check on my kid and her friend. Then we're all going to sit down and make a plan about what we're going to do."

"About what?" Billy questions.

“About Max,” Hopper clarifies, “Susan’s going to be in the hospital for a while. Max doesn’t have any other family but you, Billy. We need to have plan for taking care of her.”

He hadn’t even gotten that far. Billy jumps when he feels Hoppers hand slap down on his shoulder.

“Calm down, Kid,” Hopper comments as he pulls into the parking spot and the Jeep stops. “You gotta breathe.”

Billy has this moment where he flashes back to when he was sitting on the floor across from Steve watching him struggle through a panic attack. He remembers saying, *I’m a horrible person*. He wonders how much he’s changed since then. Wonders if it’s going to be enough.

If he’s going to be enough.

Steve is pale and shaky when Billy sees him in the hallway of the hospital. But when his eyes meet Billy’s there is so much love in them that Billy can’t stop the dry, cracked, hiccupping, sob coming from his chest and Steve literally drops what he’s holding and gathers Billy up like he’s the most precious thing in the world. Billy’s got questions, they come pouring out all garbled and unintelligible.

Steve answers them all anyway.

“You’re alright, I’ve got you. Max is awake, El is with her, her arm is broken, Susan’s going to be ok. No, it’s not your fault. None of this is your fault. I’m not leaving you. We’re going to take her home with us if she wants. Yes, I got the call. No, he didn’t hurt me. He’s not going to hurt anyone ever again. I promise. Yes, I can promise that. Yes, I can. Billy, I’ll kill the fucker myself. You’re not alone. No one blames you. You *do* have family, Billy. Baby, please...open your eyes. We’re all right here.”

When Billy finally manages to pry his face out of his soulmate’s neck and look around he realizes it’s not just Steve holding him. It’s all of them. This hot mess of a group of weirdos. Dustin pressed in tight to Steve’s side, Will wrapped around Billy’s back, Joyce has been petting his head and now reaches out with wide wet eyes to hold his hand. Mike and Nancy pressing their palms into his shoulders and Jonathan a steady presence by Nancy’s side. Billy’s humbled. It hadn’t really occurred to him that he had been accepted by this band of merry dipshits.

He pulls out Steve’s arms after brushing a shaking hand across his soulmate’s cheek and turns to go in search of Max. It’s pretty clear where she is if Lucas’s presence in front of the hospital room door is any indication. His face is tear stained, his hands are clenched and it’s clear he has something to say. “You’re gonna take care of her. Right?” Lucas demands as he presses his finger into Billy’s chest. “You’re her brother and it’s your job. If someone hurt my sister I’d take care of her it doesn’t matter that she drives me crazy and I don’t even think she likes me half the time. It’s our job as big brothers to keep them safe. And I can’t protect her so you have to do it. There are monsters, Billy. You know it. You saw, like us. He’s one of them and maybe I should have listened to you. You told me to stay away from her and I didn’t and he hurt her...”

“No, Lucas,” Billy grabs the kid and pulls him in for a hug, trying to be steady and brave even though he feels so God damn weak. “This is

Neil's fault. Not mine, not yours, not Max's. Neil's. And we all have to keep believing that right now. I promise you, I'm going to take care of her. I promise."

Max is half awake when he gets to her bedside, she rolls her head over toward him as the rest of her is kind of penned in by El. The other girl having crammed herself into the hospital bed with his...sister.

"You came," Max whispers, like she's surprised. Billy's heart breaks a little.

"Of course I did," he tries to joke as he presses the toe of his work boot against the wheel of her bed. "What are big brothers for right?"

Max eyes well up with tears and Billy rushes to make it stop. "I'm sorry, Max. I know we've been working on it and I'm an asshole. Tell me how to fix it."

"Shut up, Asshole," Max snorts. "My arm hurts, I'm tired, and Neil is shithead. I'm not crying because of any of that. You've never called me your sister before."

"Well, I should have," Billy nods, like the whole thing is settled. "I should have done a lot of things. Come home with me and Steve and help me not make those mistakes again."

Max nods, reaching up with her good hand to tangle her fingers with

his. "I broke the board you got me on his stupid face."

Billy laughs so loudly El jerks back into being awake from where she was drooling on the pillow next to Max's head. "Billy," She greets warmly. "Max had a long day."

"Looks like it," he offers when she doesn't say anything else.

"You're good," El says with a smile as she settles back into the bed and Max shifts over to make more room. "Both of you."

She closes her eyes and Max offers him a smile before he drops a kiss on her forehead. As he stands there he realizes she's right.

He's good. Like, actually pretty good.

She's terrifying. He's learned how to deal with this part of her better over the almost two years he's been raising her. But still....sometimes it's like raising a wild animal. Harder still when her logic makes a lot of sense.

"He's bad." She states with such finality. Like it's all the justification they both need to do what she's suggesting. "Like Papa."

Hopper lets out a long, slow breath and considers getting his blood pressure checked again. He needs a smoke, but promised her he'd stop. "You can't just kill someone because you think they're a bad person."

"I *know* he is. I saw it." She's emphatic.

"Kid," Hopper sighs. "We all saw it. But this just isn't how it works."

"It should be." She flops down beside him on the couch with a huff. So old and so young at the same time. "He's not safe. I could take care of it. Easy."

And he knows she's killed before. Knows that freedom and justice are concepts that she still struggles to understand. Hell, more and more often he's struggling to understand them too. But she's a kid, *his kid* and there is no fucking way he's ever going let her forget that. A kid, not a weapon. "Please don't." He asks instead of the lecture that seems to be backed up in his throat. "It's not easy on you. It makes you hurt."

"Max is hurt," El whispers and he watches the tears finally come. "Billy has hurt over and over again. Susan is hurt. I hurt. He should hurt too."

He gathers her up slowly, ready for her to send a plate flying toward his head. This physical closeness, this seeking of comfort is new to both of them. *His kid*. It sticks in his mind sometimes like a bright, shining beacon that he hasn't had in years. "I'm sorry you're hurting. I'm sorry about Max and Billy and Susan. But you can't just go

around killing people. It's not a good thing."

She's silent for a long time, pressed up under his arm on the sofa looking so small and so sad. "If he hurts them again..."

"Kiddo," he snorts. "I'll kill him myself before you ever have the chance. They're my....family too."

"Family," El whispers. He smiles when she presses her hand against where his heart is. "Max decided Billy was her brother."

"People do that sometimes," He offers with a shrug. "Family is bigger than blood. Sometimes you get a good one from the start. Sometimes you make your own"

She nods with one of those looks on her face that make him think she's really one hundred years old. Wise beyond both their years. "No killing." She finally agrees. This is their fourth time having this argument this week and the first time they've reach some kind of agreement.

He's more than a little relieved. "No killing." He nods as she goes to stand up. He watches her shuffle off to her bedroom. "Good night. Sleep tight. Bed bugs and all that other shit."

She smiles. Turns just before she pulls the door shut behind her and looks him right in the eye. "Good night...Dad."

The door shuts behind her and after a long, stunned, moment he feels this hysterical bubble of joy pour out of his mouth. He presses his hand over where hers was just few moments ago and struggles to reign in his happiness over this unexpected gift he's been given and his grief over everything he's already lost.

Billy moves to the day shift. Beverly's been more than accommodating, and living with Max has given Steve only a couple of headaches. He's happy to make the changes so that Max can be safe as her mom heals and everything settles. It's just....

Steve misses his soulmate so much. He's in an almost constant fog just trying to make it through his shifts. Hopper's been watching him, sometimes Steve goes to work and finds the errors on his shift paperwork corrected from the day before. But then Hopper starts coming into work an hour early and sending Steve home. He's grateful, stupidly so. That extra hour is an hour he gets to spend with Billy before Billy goes to work.

It's not lost on Steve that Billy is looking rough as well. Dark circles under his eyes and from the way the bed is torn apart when Steve crawls in it after Billy and Max leave in the morning it's obvious Billy's having nightmares.

That, and he's going to die from blue balls if he doesn't get one night where he and Billy can get farther than kissing and rubbing up against each other when they pass like ships in the night. The kisses are phenomenal but it's hard feeling like you're a teenager sneaking

around in your own apartment.

Or a parent trying to squeeze in time without your kid knowing what you're doing. Max is nervous and every tiny noise in the apartment makes her jump and sometimes come running. It's been....less than private.

Jesus, how do Hopper and Joyce manage to do this with all the kids between them?

And then, it's like a miracle. Steve drags himself out of his chair one morning when Hopper stomps his way into the office, ready to give report and head home to an empty bed. "You're off next shift." Hopper states by way of greeting.

"But it's Friday?" Steve's lost. Friday is usually date night for the adult couple.

"Not this week," Hopper orders. "Go home, I don't want to hear shit about you being here until Saturday night's shift. Next Friday night you and Billy are babysitting Max and El-J overnight. NO BOYS. You understand?"

"Yes, Sir," Steve nods.

"Good. Now go home, clean up, and for the love of God get laid, Steve," Hopper huffs as he rounds the corner to his office. "Before anything terrible happens."

Steve's halfway home before it occurs to him to wonder about Billy's work schedule. He's usually off on Saturdays but should be working today. Steve's not thrilled about having a whole day off with Max in school without his soulmate but it's better than having to work Saturday night.

Turns out, he should have given Hopper more credit. Billy's home, Max is already gone over to take the bus from the diner with Beverly and the other young man smiles, bright and happy, as he hands Steve a cup of coffee and announces, "Off until Monday morning. Beverly said Hopper stopped by and sweet talked her into it."

"Hopper?" Steve wonders, because really?

"Don't care," Billy shrugs. "I've got almost 30 hours alone with you. I don't care how it happened. Take your coffee, go shower, get in bed...naked. I want to rub myself all over you and you're taking too long. I have needs."

Steve blinks, a little slow on the uptake. It might be all the blood rushing to his dick. Billy crosses to where he's standing, presses up against his side and murmurs into Steve's ear, so close Steve can feel Billy's lips brush against his skin. "Princess, go shower. I've got so much I want to do with you. We might run out of time if you don't get a move on." He finishes the request with a nip at Steve's earlobe and a long slow suck of the offended area. Steve shoves him away with a huff and all but runs down the hallway.

Billy really does have plans. Fuck, if he's being honest...he actually has a list. A list of things he wants to do with Steve. He feels slightly stupid about the whole thing.

But really? It's only because it's a long list and Billy has no idea where he wants to start.

He's debating taking off his pajama pants when Steve comes stumbling, still damp, around the corner of the bedroom door from his shower wearing nothing but a low slung towel. He's panting a little, beautiful eyes wide and full of excitement, his hair's a hot mess, and he's covered in goose bumps. Billy goes from wanting to lick him all over to wanting to warm him up.

"Hey," Steve offers with a grin and a shiver. That's all it take to have Billy gathering him up and tucking them both under the covers on their bed. They tangle together awkwardly, knees and elbows everywhere. Billy only barely missing having his nose broken when Steve grabs a hold of the wet towel he was wearing and goes to throw it out of the bed.

"You know," Billy chuckles when they're finally snuggled in tight together and Steve stops shaking. "I'm pretty sure I remember both of us being good at this at some point in the not too distant past. What happened to us?"

"Parenthood." Steve says with authority and they both laugh. Billy suddenly caught up in the way Steve's eyes crinkle, the warmth of his body pressed in so close, the way his skin feels so soft against Billy's roughed palms. He can't help himself from sliding his hands down to

grab at the rounded globes of his soulmates ass and his eyes roll back at the moan Steve lets out when he grabs a handful of each cheek.

It's like a light bulb gets switched and then Steve is grabbing at his face, his hair, tugging him and kissing him so deep and hot and perfect. He's yanking at Billy's shirt and muttering "Off, Baby, off, please," when their mouths part for breath. Billy struggles out of this clothing and nearly falls out of the bed in his haste to get back to where he was, settled in his soulmate's arms.

His plans go out the window. There's nothing but Steve and how good he feels and the way they move together. Billy can feel himself sweating, hear the hitch in his breath every time their dicks drag together and gives up on anything but coming with Steve, having Steve come on him, just finally getting to the point where they're one. Steve's leg gets slung over Billy's hip, Steve rolling them slightly over to get more leverage and fuck the fact that Billy is pretty sure he has at least a little more experience than Steve in this area, he's going to let his soulmate drive this train.

And drive it he does. All the way home. Billy comes nearly sobbing as he clings to Steve with his head thrown back. Steve's teeth sunk into his neck as the other young man follows directly behind. His breathing takes a long time to go back to normal and Billy can feel how dry and crack his throat is, knows how rough he's going to sound. Feels like everything in his life is finally starting to turn out better. Like he might just figure out how to make himself whole again.

Endorphins are stupid. He snorts. Steve chuckling against his sweat dampened chest. "Was that okay?" Steve asks without looking up.

“You’re fucking me, right?”

Steve bursts out laughing, “Well, not yet, but the night is still young, I guess.”

Then he doesn’t say anything else and it takes Billy a second to realize he won’t make eye contact. “Princess,” He huffs “That was perfect. You were perfect. King Steve for real.”

Steve makes a pleased hum against his cheek before prying himself loose and tugging Billy’s hand offering “Shower?”

He thinks about putting up a fight, just because he’s contrary, it’s his nature to make everything difficult. Billy knows himself well enough to know that much. But it’s *Steve* and Steve is *his* and for once, maybe for the first time, Billy reaches up and takes Steve’s hand letting his soulmate sweep him off his feet.

Steve’s going to die. He’s sure of it. He’s going to combust from a combination of excitement and embarrassment so strong his body is just going to give out.

That or he’s going to kill Billy if that fucker doesn’t stop teasing and God Damn well put his dick where it *belongs!*

“I love it when you’re romantic,” Billy stops biting his back long enough to answer. Steve hadn’t meant to say that out loud. Three of Billy’s fingers continue their relentless slide in and out of Steve’s body. Steve whines high in the back of his throat and hears Billy make a shaky sound that might be a sob.

He’s not sure, they’ve been at this for what feels like forever, with what Billy’s done to him with his tongue and then his fingers, those fucking fingers, Steve’s not sure he’s going to ever feel whole again without Billy touching him somewhere, everywhere. “Please...” he manages to force out his throat.

“You need to be ready,” Billy answers again. Steve growls his frustration only to hear his soulmate follow with, “I can’t hurt you again.”

And Steve’s poor rattled brain is trying to figure out what Billy thinks he did to him sexually in the last 15 hours that would have hurt....but then it occurs to him that his lover isn’t thinking about tonight. He’s thinking about a plate and his fists which seems like it happened a very long time ago. He struggles to think of something to say, to make it better, to reassure, but Billy slips his fingers out of Steve and pulls him closer from where he’s bent over the kitchen counter (hell if he remembers why they ended up in the kitchen) by his hips. Steve arches his back in the hopes this is going somewhere...like up his ass. And Billy doesn’t disappoint, He grips Steve’s hips and slides in with one slow stroke. Steve wails his approval and scrambles for something to grab onto. He ends up snagging the toaster and all but rips it out of the wall.

Billy chuckles, there’s a pause and a grunted “God you feel so fucking good, Princess.” And yeah, Steve gets off on it a little. It’s ok. It’s just them here. He’s so damn glad they both got tested last month, doesn’t

want a condom between them. It's just Billy for him and Steve knows down deep in his soul that Billy hasn't even looked at another person since the night of the fight.

All his. All Steve's.

"Wish I could mark you again," Billy chokes out as he slides back in and then goes in reverse, taking his time. "Do it right this time."

Steve has no idea what he means by "right" he's long since made peace with their soul marks. But it's occurring to him that maybe Billy hasn't. They haven't really talked about it. Not that now's the time...."Billy!" Steve snarls, finally shoving the toaster off the counter onto the floor barely missing their feet.

His soulmate takes the hint, grabs Steve's hips like a lifeline, and pounds them both to screaming orgasms. If Steve's going to die, this is how he wants to go.

After, when they've slept and Steve is enjoying their last few hours before Max comes home by snuggling next to his soulmate in their bed he finally works up the nerve to ask, "Billy, do our marks bother you?"

He tries to ignore the tense set of the other's shoulders. It's a posture Billy has learned, over time, to let go of around Steve. "When I was a kid...my mom would hold me and tell me stories about what it would be like when I found my soulmate. How we would love each other and be there for one another and I wouldn't be alone anymore. When she died, I spent so much time waiting for this magical person to

come and help me. But nobody came. And then I just went from one stupid, empty, relationship after another like I was wearing shirts. And looking back I think it started because I thought if I touched enough people one of them had to be mine. But after nothing kept happening I think I just kept going to hurt myself. Like every person who wasn't my soulmate was proof that I wasn't worth loving. That I didn't deserve that kind of connection."

Steve wants to say something, to somehow reassure a younger, lonely version of this man he loves so much that he wasn't unwanted. But it's water under a bridge that isn't even his and for Steve sometimes knowing someone he loves is hurting and he can't help is the hardest thing of all. He presses his lips to Billy's forehead and stays still in his arms.

"Then there was you, King Steve," Billy snorts. "You drove me bat shit. I couldn't stand you and I wanted to be around you all the time. Then after the fight, when I woke up the next day and noticed my face....I felt like I had betrayed my mom, I had hurt you so much before I even knew you were mine. I just wish we could have a do over. I wish I hadn't been so angry. It's stupid. I just wanted the marks I had with my soulmate to be out of love, or at least like, you know?"

Steve nods as he presses tiny kisses over Billy's face. He does get it. It's not the same for him as it is for Billy, but he does understand. When it's time to get up and get ready Steve finds himself standing stupidly in the center of their bedroom watching as Billy struggles his way into a t-shirt that Steve swears is too small. "What are you looking at?" Billy huffs when he finally get the shirt tugged down.

"Your neck," Steve snorts. "Max is going to laugh her ass off." He points Billy towards the mirror and laughs when Billy's eye widen at

the red marks Steve left decorating his throat and down his shoulder.

“I look like I’ve been mauled by a small dog,” Billy whispers as he darts down the hall into the bathroom where the light is better.

“Small, my ass!” Steve complains as he follows behind. “What is it?” Billy’s face looks weird.

“These aren’t hickies,” Billy announces before grabbing Steve and yanking on his bathrobe, trying to rip it off. “I have to see.”

“Stop it!” Steve laughs as Billy finally manages to leave Steve naked. “What the fuck are you doing asshole?”

Billy’s turning him around in a circle before stopping suddenly and laughing, “Baby, your hips.”

And yeah, Steve has two huge handprints on his hips. Forever. “Thank *fuck* nobody else can see these.”

They’re late to pick up Max. Hopper rolls his eyes at Steve as he apologizes. But it’s not like he can really explain them being late because they spent a half hour tracing their new soul marks with fingertips and grateful kisses.

Max had a great time at the sleepover too.

“It happens sometimes,” Beverly says conversationally. Billy has no fucking idea what she’s talking about. Too distracted by trying to help Max with her homework and getting ready to transition the diner from the day crew to the night crew.

“Huh?” Is about the best Billy offers.

Beverly smacks him in the throat with a wet dish towel. “The marks,” she snaps. “Some soulmates get one, some don’t get any, some get new ones every so often. Maybe you and that boy of yours are the kind that need new reminders every so often.”

“Bull shit!” Billy snorts. Steve’s his and always will be. Marks or no marks, Billy’s never going to forget that.

Beverly snorts. Shuffling toward the door on her way out. “I’m moving in with Albert,” she says before she leaves. “You boys be ready to haul heavy furniture on Sunday and bring some friends.”

Billy’s used to the blunt directives. But he has a couple of concerns here. “Who the fuck is Albert?”

“My boyfriend, Dumbass,” Beverly laughs. “Did you think I was too old for a good fuck?” And Jesus, just...no. Billy will NEVER get that

out of his head. “He lives in Indianapolis in one of those retirement communities. I’m retiring, so I’m going to the community.”

“What about the house?” Because, shit, his house is above the garage. “What about the diner?”

“I’m moving out of the house,” Beverly huffs and waves him off like he’s wasting her time with his sudden life crisis. Billy’s about to have a fucking panic attack. “You stay over the garage. The new day manager is moving into the house with her kid. I need you back on nights by the way. The truckers hate your replacement and I need a night manager to watch those assholes anyway. You’re getting a raise.”

“I am?” Because that’s the only part of this whole insane conversation that Billy’s happy about. “Wait. Who’s the day manager? What if they don’t like me and Steve? What about Max? We can’t leave her home alone at night.”

Beverly levels him with this look that Billy swears would melt glass. “Son, I love you like a grandchild, assuming I’d had some. You’re a good boy, loyal, hard working, but you and your soulmate are like two little lambs lost in the woods. You’re getting a raise, going on nights, and your stepmom and sister are moving into my house. I hired her to take my job. Turns out she grew up around a place like this because her daddy ran it. Worked out good for me and gets your sister out of your hair so you can get on with your life. I don’t think you have to worry about getting put out of the garage apartment since I’m selling the house to you and Steve. It’s a shithole and needs a ton of work but you boys have time.”

Billy feels everything drain away, like he’s floating over his own

head, weightless and transparent. “Beverly....” What do you say? His mouth opens and closes and opens again. “Why?”

She smiles then, a little crooked and worn. “My daddy was meaner than three Hells. I just did everything I could to stay out of his way. But my brother, he didn’t have a lick of sense. I’m sad to say I went to sleep more nights than not to the sound of my daddy kicking the shit out of him. It’s just what people did back then. Nobody would do anything. Never would have stepped in. One morning, we all got up for chores and my brother didn’t. We buried him and moved on. But I never forgot. I always told myself if I ever had the chance I would help someone going through that. I’d do something instead of just standing by. You wandered in here that night and I finally had the chance to do something right by my brother. Something to pay him back for all the times he took the beating for me. You deserve to be safe and happy, your sister too. And I know she didn’t birth you...I know you miss your momma. But that woman...she wants to do right by you too. That makes her family in my book. And loving her a little don’t mean you love your momma any less. You’re a good boy, Billy. I’m proud to call you my family. I never had children. Too scared of being like my daddy was. If I had though; I’d would have wanted them to be like you.”

Billy’s still hugging Beverly and crying when Susan takes her first tentative steps into the diner. He’s a snot covered mess. But he’s learning, and he doesn’t hesitate to wrap her up too. Careful not to hurt by squeezing her too hard. It’s a start. He’s getting used to having those.

Later, after a very complicated conversation with Steve, Billy finds himself sprawled across his soulmate's side with his leg thrown over Steve’s hips and his arm tucked up between them.. Billy nuzzles in against Steve’s neck, right up close next to his ear and inhales the scent there. He lets it relax him, ease him closer to sleep. Steve’s fingers trailing up and down his spine while Steve hums some stupid

pop song Billy won't *ever* admit to liking. Not even a little.

"We're family," He murmurs more to himself than anyone else.

Steve rumbles a sleepy affirmative. Billy drifts off waiting to see what new surprises tomorrow will bring.

He's kinda looking forward to it.

Author's Note:

Thank you all so much for your wonderful comments about Port Wine. If anyone wants anymore from this story please let me know. I'll take requests if you have ideas.